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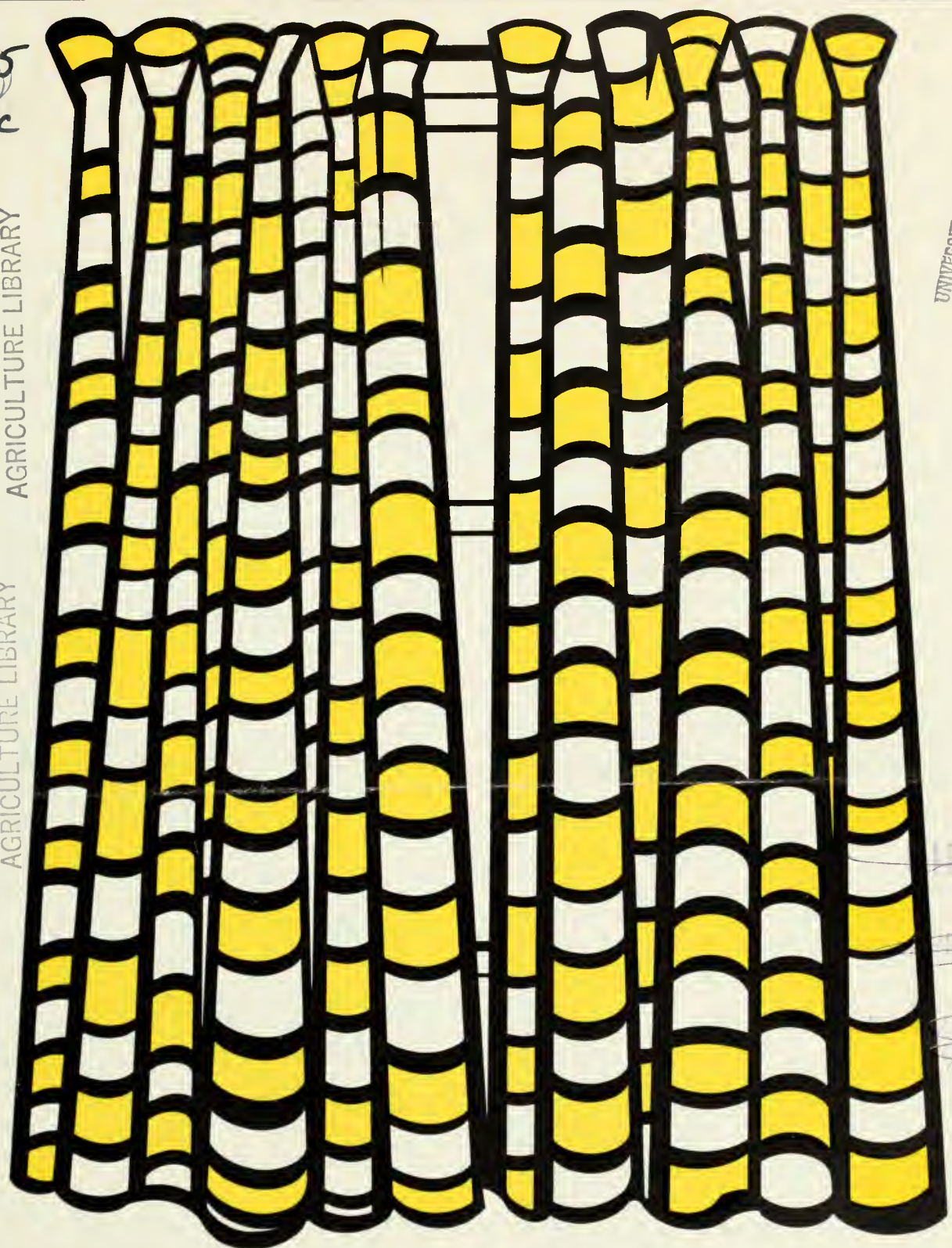


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# DRAPERIES MAKE YOUR OWN

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA/CHAMPAIGN COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE CIRCULAR 1035

ARE DRAPERIES ON THE AGENDA for your next home furnishings project? By making your own, you can save money and enjoy a sense of accomplishment. This booklet will help you sew draperies with a custom-made look in any color, texture, and design you choose.

## SEWING PREPARATIONS

Select the appropriate thread and sewing machine needles for the fabric you choose. The thread should be about the same color and weight as the drapery fabric: for cotton or linen draperies, use mercerized thread; for synthetic fabrics, use synthetic thread. If you use mercerized thread, use a number 14 needle; for synthetic thread, a number 11 needle is recommended.

Cut a small swatch of the drapery fabric and test your sewing machine's stitch and tension. If your drapery fabric is sheer, set your machine for 12 to

15 stitches per inch; for medium-weight fabrics, 10 to 12 stitches per inch will give good results. For all stitching on draperies use a loose tension to avoid puckers on seams and hemlines.

## Measuring Length and Width

The length of your draperies is a matter of personal taste, as there are several generally accepted lengths. In casual decorating, draperies may go down to the sill or to the apron; more formal draperies go to the floor. Also, draperies may be hung from any of a number of places — from the top of the window frame, at ceiling height, or from any point on the wall between the ceiling and the window frame (see Fig. 1).

The width of the draperies depends on how much window you want exposed when the draperies are open and how much wall you want to cover at the sides of the window. For maximum exposure of the window, select a drapery rod that extends beyond the sides of the window frame.

When you have decided what the dimensions of your draperies will be, go ahead and put your drapery rods in place so that your fabric measurements can be made at the window. Make the measurements with a steel tape; a cloth tape measure may stretch or sag, giving inaccurate measurements.

A commonly used drapery rod is the traverse drapery rod, which is designed with a *return* (the part of the rod from the corner to the wall) and a center front *overlap* (see Fig. 2). It is easy to use

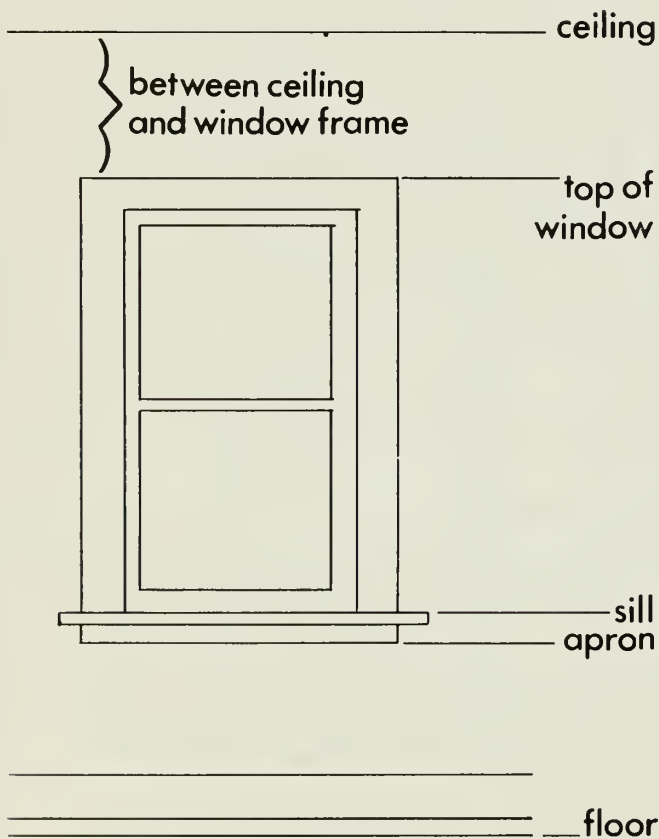


Figure 1

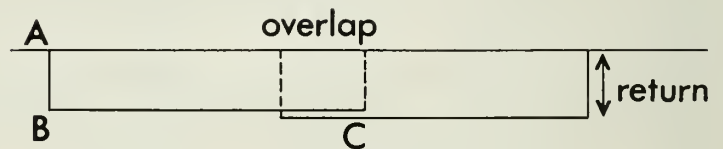


Figure 2

this kind of rod to measure the width of your draperies. Measure from A to B and from B to C. Adding these two measurements gives the width of one drapery; double this figure to get the width for a pair.

This circular was prepared by CLARA DODSON, Extension Specialist in Home Furnishings, Department of Home Economics.



## Calculating Yardage

**Width.** Suppose the rod measurements from A to B and from B to C total 35 inches. If you make the draperies with pinch pleats, as described in this publication, the width for each drapery must be doubled (to 70 inches). If the fabric you choose is not wide enough, a side piece must be added. So, allow 4 more inches for two side hems and 1 inch for a side piece seam. The total width of fabric needed for one drapery is thus  $70 + 4 + 1 = 75$  inches (see Fig. 3).

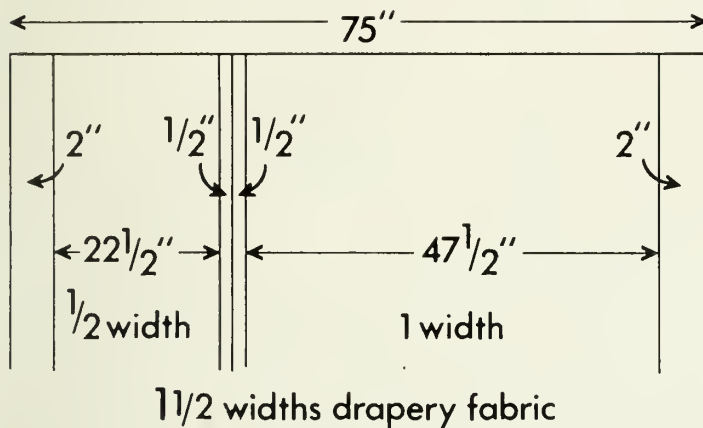


Figure 3

Suppose the fabric you select is 50 inches wide. Then each drapery will take  $1\frac{1}{2}$  fabric widths ( $75 \div 50 = 1\frac{1}{2}$ ), and a pair of draperies will take 3 widths of fabric. You may need more or less than an extra half-width per drapery, depending on fabric width and drapery measurements. The side pieces (half-widths) should be placed at the outer edges of the windows (see Fig. 4) so that the seams will be less conspicuous when the draperies are closed.

Purchase lining material the same width as the drapery material so that the lining seams will match the seams in the draperies.

**Length.** The length of material to purchase depends on whether you are making lined or unlined draperies (see Fig. 5). Unlined draperies have a double 4-inch top hem, 1 inch extending above the rod, and a double 4-inch bottom hem. To the desired drapery length, therefore, add 17 ( $4 + 4 + 1 +$

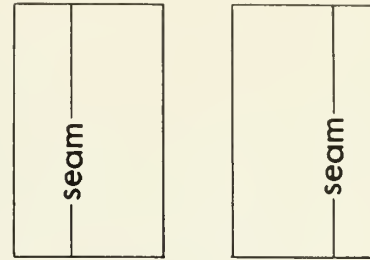


Figure 4

$4 + 4$ ) inches. If the measured length is 67 inches, for example, you should buy 84 ( $67 + 17$ ) inches of material for each width of fabric needed. If 3 fabric widths are needed, your total purchase would be  $3 \times 84 = 252$  inches (7 yards) of fabric for a pair of draperies.

Lined draperies have only a single 4-inch hem at the top, backed by lining. For lined 67-inch draperies, therefore, purchase  $67 + 4 + 1 + 4 + 4 = 80$  inches of fabric per fabric width needed. The lining does not have the double 4-inch bottom hem, so purchase lining material equal to the measured drapery length  $+ 4 + 1$  inches (in this case,  $67 + 5 = 72$ ) per fabric width needed.

## UNLINED DRAPERIES

Unlined draperies are practical and economical and take less time to make than lined draperies. Unlined draperies are also popular because daylight enhances the beauty of many of the modern textured fabrics.

### Cutting the Drapery Fabric

Cutting a drapery fabric is easier and more accurate when it is placed flat on a table. To insure correct cuts and proper hanging, start with a true crosswise grain. Pull a thread to mark the grain line, then cut along the line of the pulled thread. Measure fabric length from this cut, being sure to include allowances for hems and heading, and cut the desired length, keeping square with the first cut.

If your fabric has a distinct design that repeats itself at intervals, you may have to cut into one of the designs. A partial design will appear less conspicuous at the bottom of the drapery (compare

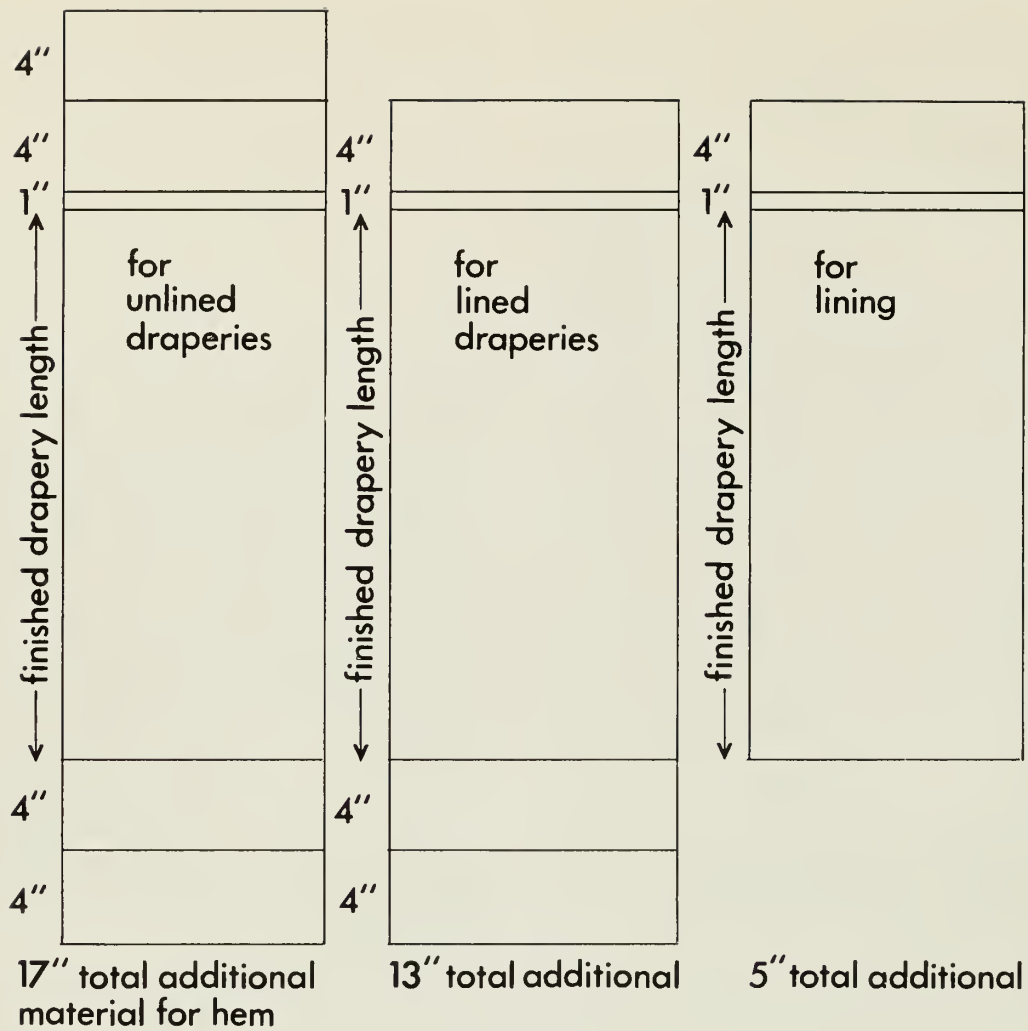


Figure 5

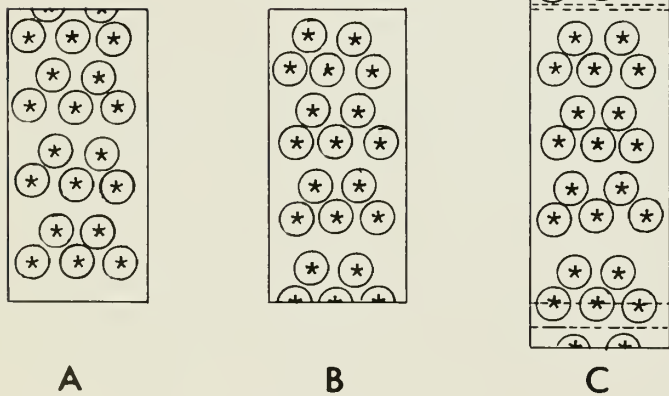


Figure 6

Figures 6A and 6B); also, furniture may be placed so as to disguise an incomplete pattern at the bottom of a drapery. Keep in mind, however, that for the finished drapery to look like 6B, you will have to cut extra material for hems, as in 6C. Thus, for unlined draperies, after you decide what part of the design you want on the finished drapery, you will cut a piece of drapery fabric that starts 9 inches above the design you wish and ends 8 inches below.

To cut other drapery lengths, lay the first length on top of the uncut fabric and pin in place before cutting. This is the time to match any patterns. Remove or clip selvages so that seams will not pucker.

Cut the side pieces, if necessary, and sew to the full width of drapery fabric as in Figure 4; press the seams open.



## Hems

Make the bottom hem of the drapery first. Turn up 8 inches and press the fold line with a warm iron. Turn under 4 of the 8 inches to the pressed crease (see Fig. 7). Pin the double 4-inch hem, being care-

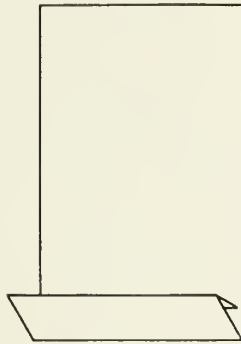


Figure 7

ful not to stretch the edge. Blind stitch the hem by sliding the needle about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch through the folded hem and picking up a few threads of the fabric on the right side of the drapery. Keep the threads loose. Examine the front of the drapery periodically to see that no stitches show and the hemline lies flat with no puckers.

To make the top hem, cut a strip of 4-inch drapery Pelon or buckram long enough to reach within  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch of the sides. Place the drapery fabric wrong side up and pin the stiffening on top (see Fig. 8). Fold this stiffened hem down twice for a double 4-inch hem. Press carefully, but do not stitch — pinch pleats will hold the top hem in place.

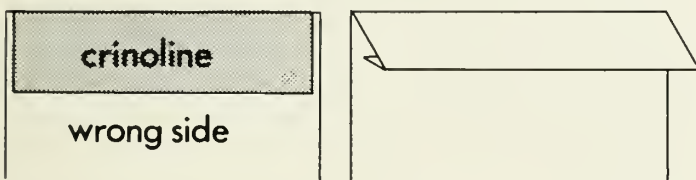


Figure 8

The side hems are  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide when finished. Pin under 2 inches on each side and press with a warm iron. Remove the pins and fold under  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch toward the crease. These hems will fold over the bottom hem (see Fig. 9) and over the top hem with stiffening. Machine or hand stitch the side hems.

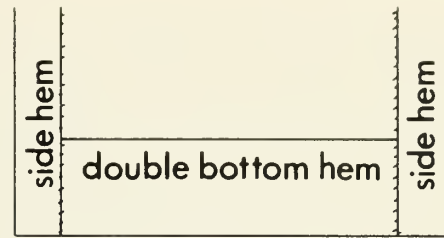


Figure 9

## Pinch Pleats

At this point the drapery in our example is 70 inches wide (after sewing the side hems and side piece seam) to be pleated down to 35 inches. Commercially made custom draperies commonly use a 4-inch spacing between pleats in the drapery heading. This spacing is only approximate, of course, because of different window widths.

**Measuring.** Instead of relying on your skill with a tape measure to determine exactly even spacings, you can easily construct an effective *elastic* measure. Evenly spaced pleats and spaces are marked on a strip of elastic; when the elastic is stretched, the marks will still be evenly spaced. Used, narrow elastic, about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch wide, has more stretch than new, wide elastic.

Use a strip of elastic about half as long as the drapery is wide (you can fold the drapery in half to measure this). Mark the elastic with a pen or pencil every 2 inches; then, mark S and P alternately (for Space and Pleat) in each 2-inch interval (see Fig. 10). Begin and end with S since there are

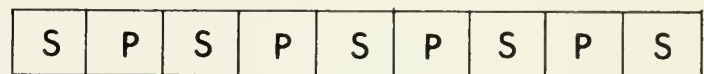


Figure 10

no pleats on the return and overlap. This means you may have to add or cut off some elastic. For example, for a 70-inch wide drapery, a 35-inch strip of elastic will have 17 intervals with 1 inch left over. To end with an S, cut off the extra inch. What is important is not the exact width of the spacings when the elastic is stretched but the fact that the spacings will be *even*.

Now you are ready to use the elastic to determine the spacing on the drapery. You will need two

people to help you. Lay the drapery on a table, right side up. Have one helper place one end of the elastic exactly at the edge of the drapery's side hem and hold firmly. Now stretch the elastic so that the other end is at the exact edge of the other side hem. The 2-inch S and P spaces now stretch to about 4 inches, with each space and each pleat all the same width. Have your helpers hold both ends of the elastic while you put a pin through the top hem of the drapery to mark each space and pleat. The spaces and pleats may be slightly more or less than 4 inches wide but all will be equal.

**Sewing.** With the drapery right side up on a table, pin each marked pleat like a tuck (see Fig. 11). Be sure to start and end with spaces for the

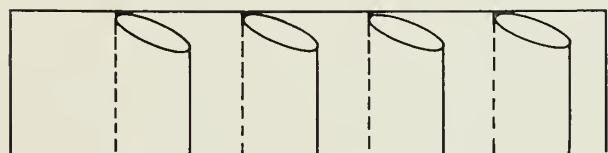


Figure 11

return and overlap. Beginning  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from the top of the drapery, backstitch to the top of the pleat, then sew the length of the stiffened hem and backstitch again (see Fig. 12). Repeat for each pleat.

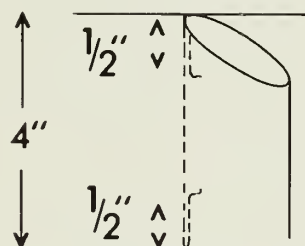


Figure 12

Now pull out each pleat and push back to form three small pleats (see Fig. 13). Pin the fronts of these three pleats together. With the zipper foot attachment on your sewing machine sew from just below the stiffened hem to the pinned folds and back to the seam line again (see Fig. 14). This way, no cut threads show on the front edges of the folded pleats.

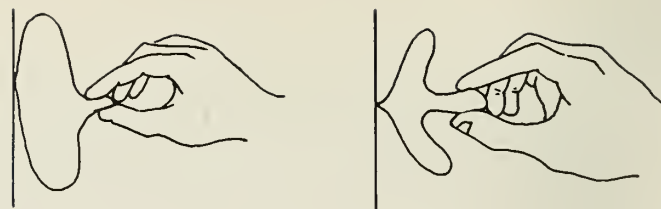


Figure 13

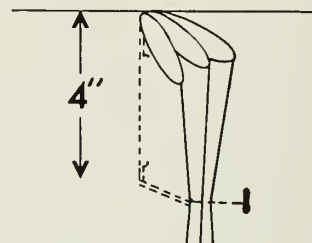


Figure 14

## LINED DRAPERIES

There are good reasons for lining draperies. The lining protects the drapery fabric from getting soiled and from fading in the sun. Moreover, a lining can give the outside of your home a uniform appearance. When choosing lining, keep your home's exterior in mind and select a fabric that will blend with it. Standard off-white or light beige polished cotton lining is usually available wherever drapery fabric is sold.

The fabrics for lined draperies can be as heavy or light as you like. You should not line fiber glass, however, or any open-mesh textured fabric designed to let daylight show through.

Measure length and width as discussed earlier. Cut off the selvages of the drapery and of the lining fabric. Pin and machine stitch a half-inch seam to join the full width of the drapery to the side piece, if necessary. Do the same for the lining. Press the seams open.

To make the bottom hem for the drapery fabric, turn up the double 4 inches and blind stitch as described in making unlined draperies. To hem the bottom of the lining, turn up 2 inches and press. Turn under  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch, machine stitch the hem, and press. The lining will be 2 inches shorter than the finished drapery length.

## Joining the Drapery to the Lining

Place the drapery right side up on a table. Put the lining wrong side up on top of the drapery. Pin together the drapery and lining seams that were used to join the full width of fabric to the side piece (see Fig. 15). Match the tops of the bottom hems of the drapery and the lining (A and B in Fig. 16 should be aligned).

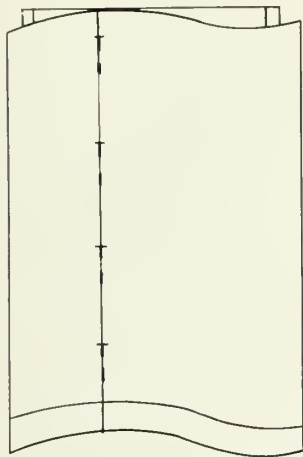


Figure 15

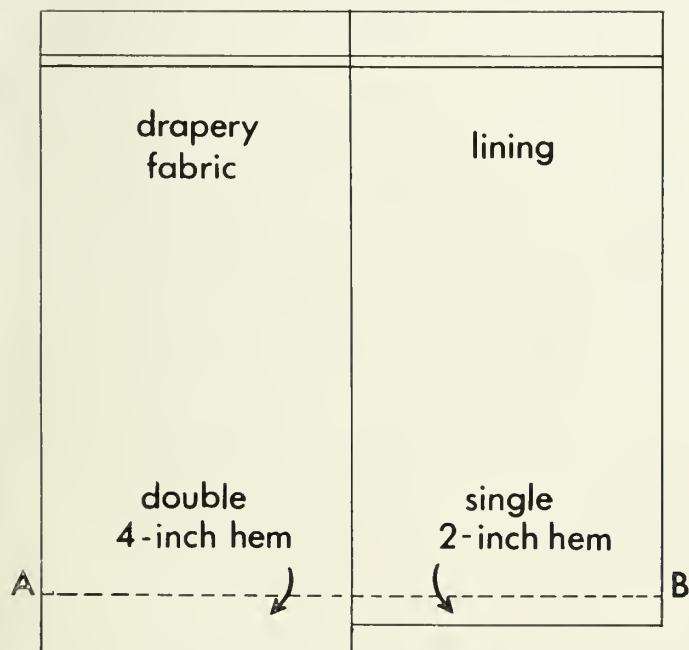


Figure 16

Pin back 2 inches of drapery material on each side,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches for the side hem plus  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch for the seam that will join the lining to the drapery. Smooth the lining out from the pinned seams toward the side hems of the drapery and pin the  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch seams together. The lining will now be too wide, so cut off the excess lining on each side hem. Machine stitch both sides. This will make a tube (see Fig. 17). When stitching lining to a heavy fabric, be sure the heavier fabric is underneath as you feed the two through the sewing machine. This prevents puckered seams.

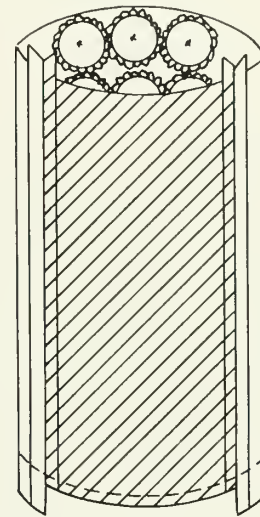


Figure 17

Keeping right sides together, pin the top edge of the drapery to the top edge of the lining. Cut a strip of drapery Pelon or buckram 4 inches wide and long enough to reach within one-eighth inch from the side hems. Pin this stiffening on top of the pinned top edge of drapery and lining. Machine stitch through drapery fabric, lining, and stiffening along the bottom edge of the 4-inch strip. Remove pins and turn the drapery right side out; the stiffened hem, drapery, and lining will be inside. Do not sew a hemline on the outside of the drapery because the pinch pleats will hold this line in place. The drapery now looks something like a pillow case.

Turn the drapery right side out and carefully press the top hem. Lay the drapery flat on a table to mark spaces and pleats for a pinch pleat heading. Measure and sew the pleats using the same method as for unlined draperies.

Instead of simply fastening the side hems at the bottom of the draperies, turn under a corner of the side hem and stitch as shown in Figure 18. This holds the lining and drapery firmly together and makes sharp edge lines on the sides of the draperies.

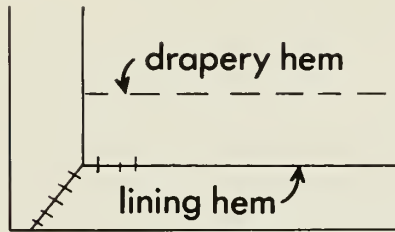


Figure 18

### HANGING DRAPERIES

Hanging your draperies requires special care, whether they are lined or unlined. First decide on the type of drapery hook to use. The slip-in type goes into the fold of each pleat. The pin-on type can be pinned into the drapery heading at each pleat 1 inch above the upper hemline. The sew-on hook is used if you don't want to pin into the fabric. The slip-in and pin-on types come out easily for cleaning; the sew-on hooks are more permanent.

Once you hang your drapes on the drapery rods, finger-press the folds, starting at the top, and finger-

pleat down the drapery for a foot or so. Tie loosely with a tape or a torn strip of cloth. Do not use thread or twine, as they might leave a mark where a flat piece of tape will not. Continue pleating downward and tie at intervals (see Fig. 19). Leave the tape tied for two or three days, then untie it. Your draperies will have conformed perfectly to your soft finger-pressed folds.



Figure 19









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